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Building Momentum in Student Engagement: Alternative Breaks and Students' Social Justice and Diversity Orientation

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Drawing from the theory of academic momentum, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between what happens before, during, and after an alternative break (AB) experience and students' reported gains in diversity and social justice orientations 1 year after their AB. Findings point to the importance of considering how these types of programs are structured and implemented, not just whether or not students participate, and of encouraging continued engagement after an AB experience.

In recent years, higher education researchers have paid increasing attention to high-impact practices—those student experiences that have repeatedly been shown to contribute to positive outcomes for students (American Association of Colleges & Universities [AAC&U], n.d.). Alternative break (AB) programs are one way to bridge two high-impact practices—service-learning and diversity/global learning. ABs are opportunities for small groups of students to spend their academic break engaging in service-learning projects, often in a different city, state, or country from their college or university. ABs are typically cocurricular experiences, but many ABs may be considered service-learning because they emphasize learning about broader social issues through engaging in service.

Similar to other high-impact practices, ABs and other immersive service-learning programs have been shown to contribute to a number of positive student outcomes. Students who participate in these types of programs demonstrate increased commitment to service and social justice (Bowen, 2011), greater understanding of social issues (Bowen, 2011; Gumpert & Kraybill-Greggo, 2005; Jones, Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, Niehaus, & Skendall, 2012), and empathy for people different from themselves (Gumpert & Kraybill-Greggo, 2005; Jones et al., 2012).

Despite these positive findings, the literature on ABs is limited in many ways. These experiences, like many other high-impact practices, are often examined in isolation, ignoring how they fit into students' larger college experience. Much of the research on ABs has been conducted immediately posttrip (e.g., Bowen, 2011; Gumpert & Kraybill-Greggo, 2005; Jones et al., 2012; for notable exceptions, see Jones, Robbins, & LePeau, 2011; Kiely, 2005), often leaving out a consideration of what happens in the months or years after students return to campus. Similarly, although there is a great deal of practice-based literature proposing best practices in ABs (e.g., Piacitelli, Barwick, Doerr, Porter, & Sumka, 2013), there is little evidence connecting these practices to long-term student outcomes. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between what happens before, during, and after an AB, and reported gains in diversity and social justice orientations 1 year later.

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DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND SERVICE-LEARNING

Some of the most frequently touted benefits of service-learning programs like ABs include increasing students' understanding of diversity, ability to identify the root causes of social issues, and commitment to social justice. In a meta-analysis of service-learning research, Yorio and Ye (2012) found overwhelming support for the influence of service-learning experiences on students' understanding of social issues (e.g., diversity awareness, perceptions of different social issues, and commitment to future service). Individual studies have also reinforced this finding. Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee (2000) found that participating in service was related to commitment to activism, promoting racial understanding, and interest in pursuing a career related to service. Often, service-learning experiences foster commitment to future socially responsible behavior and/or working for social change (e.g., Rockenbach, Hudson, & Tuchmayer, 2014).

Specifically related to ABs, Gumpert and Kraybill-Greggo (2005) found that service trip participants demonstrated more positive attitudes toward the poor, had better understanding of social issues, and were able to identify structural causes of poverty after their service trip. Similarly, Bowen (2011) found that participants in ABs reported becoming "more sensitive to human needs and social issues" (pp. 6–7), learning about social inequality, and having an increased commitment to service. In a study of four short-term immersion programs, three of which were ABs, Jones et al. (2012) found that students reported coming to "new understandings of themselves, complex social issues, and other cultures" (p. 214). Although identifying that ABs and other service-learning experiences help promote these positive outcomes for students is important, not all experiences are equally effective. It is also important to explore what about these experiences is developmentally effective so that practitioners can maximize the benefits of these experiences (e.g., Astin et al., 2014; Soria & Johnson, 2015).

Research on what about ABs facilitates student development is relatively scarce, but scholars have identified a number of best practices in the broader service-learning literature and a handful of studies on ABs and similar programs. First, in their seminal work on academic service-learning, Eyler and Giles (1999) identified the importance of high-quality service placements and of engagement in service that "meets needs identified by members of the community" (p. 178). They found that these aspects service-learning were related to decreased stereotyping and increased tolerance for diversity. Jones and Abes (2004) added that quality placements should include opportunities for students to work and develop relationships with community members.

One of the reasons why inclusion of community members in the service activities is important is because it provides opportunities for students to interact with people different from themselves. Authors of a number of studies on service-learning have identified the importance of interacting with diverse "others" in predicting student outcomes, particularly those related to diversity and social justice (e.g., Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones et al., 2012). In ABs there are three levels at which students may have the opportunity to engage with the "other"—through their interactions with the host community, other student participants, and host site staff (e.g., Jones et al., 2012; Niehaus, 2016). Jones et al. (2012) found that a broader understanding of the social issues addressed by AB service experiences, combined with building relationships with community members, helped students personalize social

issues. Keen and Hall (2009) likewise found that "opportunities to understand root causes of social justice issues" (p. 67) through service-learning experiences was a significant predictor of understanding diversity.

One of the ways that students make sense of their growing understanding of diversity and broader social issues is through reflection, one of the most frequently cited best practices in service-learning (e.g., Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2004; Kiely, 2005). Reflection can take multiple forms—typically students engage in either large-group processing sessions or individual written reflection (i.e., journaling); both forms of reflection may be important for students in different ways. Keen and Hall (2009) found that writing in reflective journals "helped [students] internalize their experiences and build capacity to listen to and dialogue with those who may be different from [the students] themselves" (p. 67). On the other hand, Yorio and Ye (2012) found that group reflection had a stronger influence on students' understanding of social issues than did journaling.

A unique feature of AB and similar programs compared to traditional service-learning is that ABs are shorter, more intense experiences (i.e., one week of full-day service activities rather than a few hours a week over the course of a semester). Kiely (2005) and Jones et al. (2012) identified intensity as a key component of students' development in these types of experiences. Piacitelli et al. (2013) hypothesized that the intense, immersive nature of ABs might make it more likely that students will connect their AB "back to their own communities, academic work, and career plans after the alternative break ends" (p. 91).

Beyond what happens during the trip, researchers and practitioners have also pointed to the importance of what happens immediately before and after service-learning/ABs. Astin et al. (2000) identified the importance of preservice training in helping students connect service to academic content. Specifically related to service trips, Gumpert and Kraybill-Greggo (2005) found that pretrip meetings built a foundation of positive group dynamics. On the other side of the experience, Jones et al. (2012) and Kiely (2005) described challenges that students may face upon returning to campus, similar to the reverse culture shock phenomenon described in the study abroad literature (e.g., Casteen, 2006). In research on students returning from study abroad experiences, Casteen (2006) found that students who had attended reorientation including information on reverse culture shock demonstrated less reverse culture shock themselves and had fewer readjustment difficulties than students who had not attended such sessions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK—ACADEMIC MOMENTUM

Beyond preparing for the experience or helping students readjust to life back on campus afterward, the short-term nature of ABs may make what happens pretrip and posttrip even more important. As Piacitelli et al. (2013) argued, "The focus on posttrip engagement has the potential to expand the impact of breaks from the projects and the trips to a lifelong transformation for those involved" (p. 91). This is important for enhancing both the potential community impact of ABs and student development. As Keen and Hall (2009) found in a longitudinal study, "the larger college experience, and not just one or more service-learning classes, may be essential to increase the chances that seniors will value dialogue and service opportunities to address social justice concerns" (p. 65). Many scholars and practitioners have questioned the value of such short-term experiences (ABs are typically only one week long) in facilitating development (e.g.,

Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Jones et al., 2011), and research has shown that students often have a difficult time integrating what they have learned in an AB into their lives once they return home (Jones et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2011). As such, considering what students do when they return to campus is particularly important.

One lens through which to view the relevance of pretrip and posttrip experiences in students' development is the theory and research on academic momentum. Academic momentum bridges students' skill and will—their belief in their ability to perform a particular task and their motivation to actually do so (Strahan, 2008). This theory builds on Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy; prior accomplishment enhances one's sense of efficacy in a particular domain, thus increasing the motivation for and likelihood of engaging in similar activities in the future.

The theory of academic momentum in higher education comes out of the literature on student persistence (Adelman, 2006)—the more momentum a student has (typically measured by factors such as high school preparation, number of credit hours taken in the first year of college, and/or continuous enrollment), the more likely a student is to persist (Adelman, 2006; Attwell, Heil, & Reisel, 2012; Martin, Wilson, Liem, & Ginns, 2013). The more students invest in their education, the more likely they are to continue to do so over time, building their skill and will to complete academic tasks (i.e., their academic momentum). In a study of academic momentum among Australian college students, Martin et al. (2013) found that students' academic decisions and performance were iterative in nature, "connecting prior learning and achievement with subsequent learning and achievement" (p. 664). Importantly, they found that *what* students did mattered less than how the specifics of what they did built (or inhibited) momentum.

Although the theory of academic momentum has generally been applied in the persistence literature, there is ample evidence that momentum matters in student engagement. For example, a number of studies have shown that prior experience is a predictor of future engagement, reflecting students' momentum (skill and will) in a particular area (e.g., Cruce & Moore, 2012; Rockenbach et al., 2014). Although not discussed specifically in terms of momentum, researchers have often attributed this chain of engagement to issues of skill and will. As Rockenbach et al. (2014) explained,

> life goals and subsequent service participation are a function of students' citizenship predispositions, the intensity and context of service involvement, and, importantly, the benefits that students derive from their service participation. Becoming a more compassionate and socially aware person as a result of service work is positively linked to committing oneself to a meaningful life marked by helping others, civic engagement, and service. (p. 312)

Importantly, this type of engagement momentum is not just exclusive to service engagement, and is found not only within the same category of engagement. Researchers have found a similar pattern of engagement in high school, college, and postcollege diversity experiences (Bowman, 2012), and Bowman, Brandenberger, Hill, and Lapsley (2011) found a connection between college diversity experiences (i.e., taking an ethnic studies course or attending a racial/cultural awareness workshop) and postcollege service engagement.

In addition to past experience predicting future engagement, research in the area of study abroad has pointed to the importance of what students do after a particular experience in facilitating student development. For example, in a longitudinal study of the effect of study abroad experiences on intercultural

competence, Salisbury, An, and Pascarella (2013) found that students who studied abroad were likely to have more contact with diversity once returning to campus. They also found that after controlling for fourth-year diversity and integrative learning experiences, studying abroad was not a significant predictor of two of the three domains of intercultural competence they examined; they concluded that the most important influence of study abroad on students' intercultural competence may have to do with what they do when they come back to campus, rather than what they actually do while studying abroad.

Similarly, in a longitudinal study of students who participated in a weeklong leadership-focused study abroad course, Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) found that 1 year after the course, half of the students who had participated had found ways to build on their experience and integrate their learning into their lives in a variety of ways; the other half had not. As Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus concluded, sometimes students' posttrip experiences are even more important than the trip itself. They argued that "the extent to which students learn from a short-term study abroad experience may depend more on what those students do after they have returned home than on anything they did while abroad" (pp. 223–224).

THIS STUDY

Although there is ample evidence that momentum matters in student engagement and development, little research in this area has specifically applied this perspective to understanding the effect of engagement experiences on students. Often student engagement studies examine specific experiences in isolation (e.g., Bowen, 2011; Einfeld & Collins, 2008), or simply control for other types of engagement in isolating the effect of one type of program on student outcomes (e.g., Salisbury et al., 2013). The purpose of this study is to explore how outcomes of participating in an AB are influenced by students' momentum—what happens before, during, and after the experience. As ABs and other service-learning experiences are often designed to facilitate learning about diversity and social justice, in this study I focused on the extent to which students perceived a change in and an influence of their AB on their diversity and social justice orientations 1 year after their AB. Specifically, I sought to answer the following four research questions: (a) What prior experiences do students bring with them to an AB? (b) To what extent and in what ways do students engage in activities after returning from an AB that they see as helping them build on what they learned during their AB? (c) To what extent do students report changes in and the influence of their AB on their diversity and social justice orientations 1 year after their AB? and (d) To what extent are students' experiences before, during, and after their AB related to changes in and the influence of the AB on their diversity and social justice orientations?

Data Source

Data for this study come from the National Survey of Alternative Breaks (NSAB), a multiphase, national survey of students who participated in ABs during the spring of 2011. Although the NSAB included both quantitative and qualitative phases, the data for this particular study come from two surveys—one administered immediately after students returned to campus from their AB trips and one follow-up that was administered approximately 1 year later. The NSAB surveys were developed based on the existing literature on ABs, study abroad, and international and domestic service-learning; reviewed by content and survey methods experts; and piloted

during the winter of 2011 (for Phase 1) and 2012 (for Phase 2).

Sampling for the NSAB occurred at the institution level and the student level. First, a list of institutions with ABs was provided by staff at Break Away, an organization that works with campuses to organize high-quality AB experiences. This list included both Break Away members and nonmember institutions. From this list, a stratified random sample of 100 institutions was selected based on institution size, control (public, private, and religious), and Break Away membership to ensure a broad representation of different institutions in the sample. Large research institutions were intentionally oversampled to ensure adequate student-level response. At the student level, all students participating in ABs at selected institutions were invited to participate in the Phase 1 survey. All students who completed the Phase 1 survey and provided a valid e-mail address were invited to complete the Phase 2 survey 1 year later. The Phase 1 response rate was approximately 35%, Phase 2 approximately 30%.

The analytic sample for this study included 558 students who responded to both phases of the survey, representing 279 separate AB trips at 84 colleges and universities. The sample was 81% female and 19% male; 76.5% White, 4.9% African American, 8.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.8% Hispanic, 7.3% Multiracial, and 1.0% "Other Race." Data on students' institutions were obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: 14.6% of the participants attended a private institution, 23.3% religious, and 62.1% public; 58% attended doctorate-level institutions, 25% master's, 16% baccalaureate, and 1% associate's. Participants most commonly identified that issues related to poverty, hunger, or homelessness were the focus of their AB experience (35%), followed by environmental issues and disaster relief (21%), education and youth development (11%), race and civil rights (10%), and health care (10%). The majority of participants (59%) indicated that they primarily engaged in manual labor during their AB, and almost one third (29%) reported primarily providing direct services (e.g., tutoring or mentoring). Most participants (82.5%) participated in ABs within the United States but in a different city than their college or university, 13.8% participated in international ABs, and 3.7% participated in ABs in the same location as their college or university.

Variables and Conceptual Framework

This study applied Niehaus's (2012) conceptual framework for studying ABs, which is based on Astin and antonio's (2012) inputs-environments-outcomes model and prior literature on ABs, study abroad, and service-learning. This framework has been shown to be useful in unpacking the various features of ABs (Niehaus, 2016; Niehaus & Inkelas, 2015; Niehaus & Rivera, 2016). In this framework, inputs include class level, gender, race, and prior experience (with study abroad, international travel, service-learning, and other ABs). These variables have been identified in previous literature as those that may lead to differences in social justice and diversity orientations broadly, and may influence how students make meaning of ABs and similar experiences (e.g., Cook, 2004; Malewski & Phillon, 2009). Distal environments include institution type and control.

As described in the literature review, a number of features of ABs have been identified in the prior literature (on ABs and service-learning more broadly). These proximal environments include placement quality (community engagement and service engagement), engagement with the "other" (interactions with, perceived difference from, and learning from students, staff, and

community members), connections to social issues, reflection (both group discussion and journaling), program intensity (physical and emotional challenge), orientation, and reorientation. Finally, for this particular study, a fourth set of variables was added to the framework to reflect posttrip engagement, which included a composite variable that measured the extent to which students engaged in subsequent activities after their AB that allowed them to build on what they had learned during their AB. This was measured by the sum of students' responses to 12 items asking the extent to which each activity helped them build on what they learned during their AB with responses from 0 (*not at all/did not participate*) to 4 (*a great deal*). Activities included participating in community service, taking a service-learning course, engaging in advocacy, studying abroad, traveling abroad, changing one's major, changing or altering one's career plans, considering participating in a postgraduation service program, participating in an internship, participating in research with a faculty member, participating in a student organization related to the AB trip, and/or taking a course related to the topic of the AB trip. As this variable was bimodal and positively skewed (a large number of students had no posttrip activities reflected on the survey), two dummy variables were created with a no posttrip engagement (n = 114) referent group: some posttrip engagement (n = 283) and high posttrip engagement (n = 161). See Table 1 for a description of each independent variable and how it was measured in the NSAB.

The outcomes used in this study were four scales developed from the Phase 2 survey, reflecting student perceptions 1 year after their AB. Students were asked on the survey first to report the extent to which they thought that they had changed in a variety of ways since before their AB (e.g., their commitment to social justice or their understanding of their own racial/ethnic identity); later in the survey they were asked to report the extent to which they thought that their AB had influenced them in those same ways. Each item reflected students' perception of their skill or will in engaging with diversity or social justice work (e.g., ability to get along with people different from themselves; interest in spending time with people with different religious views; confidence in their ability to make a difference in the world). From these items, four scales were developed using exploratory factory analysis (using principal axis factoring and varimax rotation)—the extent to which students perceived that their social justice orientation and diversity orientation had changed over the past year (SJO Change and DivO Change) and the extent to which they perceived that their social justice orientation and diversity orientation had been influenced by their AB (SJO Influence and DivO Influence). Items, descriptive statistics, factor loadings, and scale reliabilities for each of the four scales are provided in Tables 2 and 3.

Data Analysis

To answer the first two research questions, frequencies were calculated on each of the survey items reflecting pretrip experiences or posttrip engagement, or which were included in each of the four outcome measures. To answer the last research question, multiple linear regression was employed following Niehaus's (2012) framework for studying ABs. Inputs, distal environments, proximal environments, and posttrip experiences were each entered in to the regression model one block at a time to examine the overall model fit ($\Delta R2$) at each step in addition to the significant contribution of individual predictors. Due to the large number of variables in the conceptual framework, the regression analysis was conducted in two steps. First, all variables in the framework were included as predictors

TABLE 1.
Description of Independent Variables

Variable (Scale Reliability)	Description	Factor Loading
	INPUTS	
Gender	0 = female, 1 = male	
Race	Five dummy-coded variables with White as the referent group: African American, Asian/ Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Multiracial, other race	
Prior AB	Number of prior alternative breaks (ABs)	
Prior Community Service Experience	Two separate variables reflecting how often students reported engaging in community service during high school or college (0 = *never*, 1 = *less than once a month*, 2 = *once a month*, 3 = *more than once a month but less than once a week*, 4 = *once a week or more*)	
Prior Study Abroad	1 = *yes*, 2 = *no*	
Prior Travel Abroad	Number of countries students reported traveling to outside of the United States	
	DISTAL ENVIRONMENTS	
Institutional Control	Two dummy-coded variables with "public" as the referent group: private/religious and private/nonreligious	
Institution Type	Three dummy-coded variables with "doctoral/research" as the referent group: associate's, baccalaureate, and master's	
	PROXIMAL ENVIRONMENTS	
Community Engagement (α = .868)	The extent to which . . . (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*)	
	students worked directly with the community	.848
	the community was involved in the execution of the project	.857
	the community was involved in the design of the project	.822
	students developed relationships with people in the community being served	.797
	students met community-identified needs	.719
Service Engagement (α = .806)	The extent to which students . . . (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*)	
	were making a positive contribution	.799
	had important levels of responsibility	.730
	were active participants rather than observers	.728
	engaged in a variety of tasks	.697
	received input from on-site supervisors	.689
	were appreciated by on-site supervisors	.669
Physical Challenge	The extent to which students felt that they were physically challenged by their experience (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*)	
Emotional Challenge	The extent to which students felt that they were emotionally challenged by their experience (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*)	
Community Interaction	The frequency with which students reported interacting with community members (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or twice during the week*, 3 = *more than once or twice but less than ever day*, 4 = *once a day*, 5 = *more than once a day*)	
Community Difference	The extent to which students felt that community members were different from themselves (1 = *not at all different*, 5 = *completely different*)	
Community Learning	The amount that students reported learning from community members (0 = *nothing*, 4 = *quite a lot*)	
Staff Interaction	The frequency with which students reported interacting with host site staff (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or twice during the week*, 3 = *more than once or twice but less than ever day*, 4 = *once a day*, 5 = *more than once a day*)	
Staff Difference	The extent to which students felt that host site staff were different from themselves (1 = *not at all different*, 5 = *completely different*)	

table continues

TABLE 1. *continued*

Variable (Scale Reliability)	Description	Factor Loading
Staff Learning	The amount that students reported learning from host site staff (0 = *nothing*, 4 = *quite a lot*)	
Student Difference	The extent to which students felt that other students on the trip were different from themselves (1 = *not at all different*, 5 = *completely different*)	
Student Learning	The amount that students reported learning from other students on the trip (0 = *nothing*, 4 = *quite a lot*)	
Social Issues (α = .805)	The extent to which students agreed that . . . (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*)	
	I was able to see the larger context of the social issue addressed by my 2011 AB trip	.819
	my 2011 AB allowed me to come to a greater understanding of the social issue being addressed by my trip	.824
	my 2011 AB trip helped me connect real people to the trip social issue	.786
	I was able to connect my 2011 AB trip to other things I have learned outside the classroom	.670
	my 2011 AB allowed me to come to a greater understanding of the region where my trip took place	.659
Reflection (α = .831)	The frequency with which students . . . (0 = *never*, 1 = *once or twice during the week*, 2 = *more than once or twice but less than every day*, 3 = *once a day*, 4 = *more than once a day*)	
	spent time with the entire group reflecting on their experiences	.837
	discussed the impact of your group's service work with other students on your trip	.803
	engaged in activities with others in your group to help you reflect on your experiences	.822
	discussed your experiences with a student trip leader	.813
Journaling	How frequently students wrote in an individual journal (0 = *never*, 1 = *once or twice during the week*, 2 = *more than once or twice but less than every day*, 3 = *once a day*, 4 = *more than once a day*)	
Orientation	The total number of activities in which students reported engaging prior to their trip (out of 7 possible choices), including learn about the mission and objectives of the organization with whom they were working during their AB trip; learn about the history or culture of the location they traveled to; receive training in skills that would be necessary for the project they would work on; learn about the social issue being addressed by their trip; discuss culture shock or cross-cultural communication skills	
Reorientation	The total number of activities in which students reported engaging after their trip (out of 8 possible choices), including discuss their experiences with the other students on the trip, other students from their college or university who went on different trips, or others on their campus who were not part of the AB; or having been provided with information on reverse culture shock or encouraged to find ways to engage in future community service or service-learning activities, or to find other ways to build on their AB, either by some affiliated or unaffiliated with their AB	
Location	1 = *international*, 0 = *domestic*	
Posttrip Engagement	Two dummy variables with "no posttrip engagement" (students who either did not participate in any of the named activities posttrip, or overall assessed that these activities did not help them build on what they had learned in their AB) as a referent group	
Some Posttrip Engagement	Students participated in at least some activities that they assessed helped them build on what they had learned during their AB; the total number of activities in which students in this group participated ranged from 1 to 9, and their overall momentum score (the sum of their ratings of the extent to which these activities helped them build on what they learned during their AB) ranged from 1 to 11	
High Posttrip Engagement	Students participated in multiple activities that they assessed helped them build on what they had learned during their AB; the total number of activities in which students in this group participated ranged from 4 to 11, and their overall momentum score (the sum of their ratings of the extent to which these activities helped them build on what they learned during their AB) ranged from 12 to 30	

TABLE 2.
Social Justice Orientation

	Change (α = .784, *M* = 3.88, *SD* = 0.573)				Alternative Break Influence (α = .895, *M* = 3.69, *SD* = 0.955)			
	Factor Loading	*M*	*SD*	% More / Much More Than	Factor Loading	*M*	*SD*	% > Somewhat
Commitment to Social Justice	.775	3.76	0.721	62.8	.848	3.61	1.115	57.2
Understanding of the Root Cause(s) of Social Issues	.763	3.98	0.672	77.4	.904	3.65	1.133	60.6
Compassion for Others	.585	3.87	0.751	67.4	.779	3.80	1.057	67.4
Confidence in Your Ability to Make a Difference in the World	.654	3.92	0.790	73.8	.770	3.69	1.078	63.3

TABLE 3.
Diversity Orientation

	Change (α = .856, *M* = 3.69, *SD* = 0.527)				Alternative Break Influence (α = .931, *M* = 3.28, *SD* = 0.979)			
	Factor Loading	*M*	*SD*	% More / Much More Than	Factor Loading	*M*	*SD*	% > Somewhat
Understanding of People From a Different Racial/ Ethnic Group	.688	3.97	0.722	73.6	.782	3.65	1.129	63.5
Understanding of Your Own Racial/Ethnic Identity	.643	3.50	0.703	40.3	.813	2.99	1.198	33.6
Ability to Get Along With People Different From Yourself	.709	3.84	0.755	66.0	.797	3.57	1.124	56.1
Interest in Spending Time With People With Different Political Views	.663	3.52	0.748	43.4	.837	3.10	1.124	38.5
Ability to See the World From Different Points of View	.677	3.99	0.714	77.7	.830	3.61	1.088	62.6
Interest in Spending Time With People With Different Religious Views	.594	3.41	0.704	36.2	.757	2.81	1.249	29.7
Openness to Views That You Oppose	.770	3.63	0.704	53.9	.875	3.29	1.155	47.9

for each outcome. Second, the regression analysis for each outcome was recalculated with only those predictors that were significant in the first analysis for that outcome (at $p < .10$ to err on the side of inclusion vs. exclusion) to examine more parsimonious models. In each analysis the data were found to be consistent with the assumptions of regression analysis.

Limitations

Before moving on to a description of the results, it is first important to note a few key limitations of this study. First, the NSAB employed a posttest-only design with no comparison group. Therefore, it is impossible to know whether or not the outcomes associated with ABs in this study are truly due to the AB, rather than some other factor (such as student predisposition to the particular outcome or general maturation). However, the purpose of the study was not to compare AB participants to nonparticipants, but rather to compare different features of programs and students' posttrip experiences to identify empirically based best practices within ABs. Second, although within an acceptable range for student surveys (Porter & Whitcomb, 2005), the response rate for each phase of the NSAB was modest—35% for Phase 1 and 30% for Phase 2. However, it is important to note that surveys like the NSAB that focus on specific behaviors, that target specific populations, and that have participants with a prior relationship with the sponsor of the survey (in this case, the office that sponsored the AB) tend to have lower nonresponse bias, even with lower response rates (Groves & Peytcheva, 2008). Consistent with this, an analysis comparing students who did and did not respond to the Phase 2 survey showed no significant differences in outcomes measured on the Phase 1 survey.

Finally, the outcome for this study relied solely on student self-reported gains. As many higher education researchers have pointed out (e.g., Bowman & Seifert, 2011), student perceptions of development may have more to do with student satisfaction with a particular experience than with actual gains. Others have argued for the validity of student self-reports, particularly in correlational research (such as this study) or when exploring group differences (Cole & Gonyea, 2010). As Pike (2011) argued, the validity of student self-reports depends on the purpose of the study. As the purpose of this study was to explore the role of momentum in predicting student outcomes, outcome measures that reflect momentum (i.e., students' perceptions of their own skills and their will or motivation to act on those skills) are appropriate. However, future research on ABs and similar experiences should follow up on these findings using more direct measures of student development.

RESULTS

Prior to their 2011 AB, the vast majority of students had participated in some form of community service or service-learning in both high school (89.0%) and/or college (91.7%); more than two thirds of respondents had engaged in service at least once a month during college. Most respondents (69.6%) had never participated in an AB before, but 17.2% had one prior AB and 13.2% had two or more prior ABs. More than two thirds of students had previously traveled abroad (72.8%), but only 19.1% had studied abroad.

One year after returning from their 2011 AB, students reported engaging in a range of related activities. Most students participated in 4 to 5 different activities measured on the survey; the total number of activities reported ranged from 0 to 11, with a mean of 4.87. The most common activities were participating in community service or service-learning (90.5% reported doing so), considering participating in a postgraduate service program

(69.2%), engaging in advocacy (60.6%), and changing or altering one's career plans (46.6%). The activities that most helped students build on what they learned during their AB included participating in a student organization related to the topic of the AB (M = 2.83), taking a course related to the topic of the AB (M = 2.71), participating in community service or service-learning (M = 2.64), engaging in advocacy (M = 2.61), or taking a service-learning course (M = 2.57).

With regard to students' perceptions of a change in and influence of the AB on their diversity and social justice orientations 1 year after their AB, approximately half to three quarters of students reported positive change in and a substantial influence of their AB on items related to social justice orientation (see Table 2) and diversity orientation (see Table 3).

The regression analysis identified a number of key variables that contributed to changes in and the influence of the AB on students' social justice and diversity orientations; standardized coefficients for the final models for each outcome, which can be interpreted as effect sizes, are reported in Table 4. The only prior experience that was a significant predictor of any of the outcomes was the frequency of high school services, which was a negative predictor of perceived change in social justice orientation ($\beta = -.103$, $p < .05$), influence of the AB on social justice orientation ($\beta = -.100$, $p < .05$), and change in diversity orientation ($\beta = -.129$, $p < .01$). Very few inputs and distal environments were significant predictors of any of the four outcomes, and those blocks of variables generally explained only a small amount of variance.

The block of variables containing proximal environments, however, explained 15.2% ($p < .001$) of the variance in perceived change in social justice orientation, 25.2% ($p < .001$) of the variance in perceived influence of the AB on students' social justice orientation, 11.3% ($p < .001$) of the variance in perceived change in diversity orientation, and 26.2% ($p < .001$) of the perceived influence of the AB on students' diversity orientation. Of particular note, the extent to which students reported learning from community members was a significant positive predictor of perceived change in social justice orientation ($\beta = .160$, $p < .01$) and perceived influence of the AB on students' social justice orientation ($\beta = .142$, $p < .01$). The comprehensiveness of students' pretrip orientation experiences was similarly a significant positive predictor of perceived change in social justice orientation ($\beta = .145$, $p < .01$) and perceived influence of the AB on students' social justice orientation ($\beta = .126$, $p < .01$). The predictors of both outcomes related to diversity orientation, however, showed slightly different patterns. The extent to which students reported learning from host site staff was a significant predictor of both perceived change in ($\beta = .167$, $p < .001$) and influence of the AB on ($\beta = .133$, $p < .05$) students' diversity orientation. The frequency with which students interacted with community members was also a significant predictor of perceived influence of the AB on students' diversity orientation ($\beta = .121$, $p < .05$).

There were two areas of overlap between the two sets of outcomes. The extent to which students reported learning from other students in their group was a positive predictor of perceptions of the influence of the AB on students' social justice ($\beta = .131$, $p < .01$) and diversity orientations ($\beta = .103$, $p < .05$). The comprehensiveness of the reorientation experiences was a significant predictor of perceived changes in both diversity ($\beta = .096$, $p < .05$) and social justice ($\beta = .179$, $p < .001$) orientations.

Examining the significant predictors across the four steps of the analysis for each outcome, it was interesting to note that the comprehensiveness of the reorientation experience was a significant predictor for

TABLE 4.
Parsimonious Regression Results (Standardized Betas)

	SJO Change	SJO Influence	DivO Change	DivO Influence
		INPUTS		
Gender		–.089*		–.054
African American	.093*	.026	.059	.060
API	.088	–.013	.059	.021
Hispanic	.023	–.052	.069	–.021
Multiracial	.064	.009	–.026	.024
Other Race	.024	–.062	.027	–.014
Class Level	–.150**		–.108*	–.086
College Service		.074		.018
HS Service	–.103*	–.100*	–.129**	–.068
Travel Abroad			–.050	
		DISTAL ENVIRONMENTS		
Religious Institution	–.134*	–.017	–.099	–.037
Private Institution	–.155*	–.074	–.126*	–.078
Associate's	.045	.018	.029	.024
Baccalaureate	.057	.058	.042	.038
Master's	.189**	.137*	.172**	.094
Proximal Environments				
Service Engagement	.117*	.141**		.075
Community Engagement	–.097			
Emotional Challenge			.023	.025
Community Interaction				.121*
Community Difference				.055
Community Learning	.160**	.142**		.088
Staff Interaction				–.080
Staff Learning	.060		.167***	.133*
Student Difference		.069		
Student Learning		.131**		.103*
Orientation	.145**	.126**		.107
Reorientation	.096*	.076	.179***	.073
International			–.063	
		POSTTRIP ENGAGEMENT		
Some Posttrip	.339***	.522***	.214*	.557***
High Posttrip	.558***	.824***	.482***	.815***
R^2 Inputs	.039*	.053*	.073***	.049
ΔR^2 Distal	.041**	.036*	.034*	.022
ΔR^2 Proximal	.152***	.252***	.113***	.262***
ΔR^2 Posttrip	.096***	.168***	.088***	.143***
R^2 Total	.328	.509	.308	.476

Notes. API = Asian/Pacific Islander; DivO = diversity orientation; HS = high school; SJO = social justice orientation. The final, parsimonious regression analysis included only those variables that were significant ($p < .10$) in the initial model. The initial model included all variables described in Table 1.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

perceived influence on both diversity orientation and social justice orientation in the third step of the analysis, but was no longer significant after accounting for different levels of posttrip engagement. Similarly, the frequency with which students had engaged in service in college prior to the AB was a significant, positive predictor of perceived influence on both diversity and social justice orientation in the first two steps of the analysis, but was no longer significant after accounting for students' experiences during and after the AB.

The final block of the regression analyses that contained the composite variable of the extent to which students engaged in activities in the year after their AB that they felt helped them build on what they had learned from their AB explained an additional 9.6% ($p < .001$) of the variance in perceived change in social justice orientation, 16.8% ($p < .001$) of the variance in perceived influence of the AB on students' social justice orientation, 8.8% ($p < .001$) of the variance in perceived change in diversity orientation, and 14.3% ($p < .001$) of the perceived influence of the AB on students' diversity orientation. Compared to students with no posttrip engagement, students with both some and high levels of posttrip engagement scored higher on all four outcomes. Although all of the effect sizes for proximal/program environment variables were quite small (less than .2), the effect sizes for some posttrip engagement were mostly medium (between .3 and .6, with the exception of a relatively small effect of .2 on perceived change in diversity orientation) and the effect sizes for high posttrip engagement were medium to large (ranging from just less than .5 to just more than .8).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study I have built on the existing literature on high-impact practices in higher education (AAC&U, n.d.) by exploring the role of momentum—what happens before, during, and after a particular experience—in facilitating student development. Specifically, the findings from this study point to the potential for ABs to contribute to students' perceptions of changes in and the influence of an AB on their diversity and social justice orientations 1 year after the experience, explore what experiences students are bringing to their ABs and what they are doing after they return to campus, and identify the role of pretrip experiences, program experiences, and posttrip engagement in predicting student outcomes.

Consistent with the previous literature on ABs and other service-learning experiences (e.g., Bowen, 2011; Gumpert & Kraybill-Greggo, 2005; Jones et al., 2012; Kiely, 2005), students in this study reported perceiving a great deal of change in their diversity and social justice orientations a year after their AB, *and* generally perceived that their AB had a great deal of influence on both of these outcomes. This was the case for survey items that reflected both students' perceptions of their skills in these areas (e.g., understanding of the root causes of social issues or ability to see the world from different points of view) and their will to engage with social justice and diversity issues (e.g., interest in spending time with people with different political views, confidence in their ability to make a difference in the world), consistent with theories of academic motivation—for these students, an AB experience facilitated the skill and will to engage in future diversity and social justice work.

Unpacking the role of momentum in these outcomes, the findings from this study show that students are coming to ABs with a wealth of prior service experience, some travel experience, and generally little other AB or study abroad experiences. On one hand, the regression results do not seem to support the application of theories of academic

momentum to these experiences, as only high school service was a significant predictor of any of the outcomes, and in all three cases it was a negative predictor. The more service students had engaged in during high school, the less likely they were to perceive a change in or an influence of the AB on their social justice orientation, or to perceive a change in their diversity orientation. Rather than building momentum, there seems to be something of a ceiling effect; more prior experience means there is less room for growth, or that each individual experience may have less influence.

It may also be that, as Martin et al. (2013) found with regard to academic momentum, it matters less what students are doing and more how they are "connecting prior learning and achievement with subsequent learning and achievement" (p. 664). If students are failing to connect prior experiences to their AB in meaningful ways, they may be failing to build momentum to enhance their learning from these experiences. Future research should focus on if and how students are connecting different experiences, and how faculty and staff can best support students in doing so.

On the other hand, it may be that what happens during and after an AB has a stronger influence on outcomes than pretrip experiences, consistent with the finding that the frequency with which students engaged in service activities prior to the AB was a significant predictor of both influence outcomes until accounting for students' program and posttrip experiences. It may be that momentum does matter, but that prior experiences matter *only* in predicting AB participation, which would be consistent with prior literature establishing that past service predicts future service engagement (e.g., Cruce & Moore, 2012; Rockenbach et al., 2014).

The findings from this study clearly indicate that what happens during an AB trip does matter, evidenced by the relatively high variance accounted for by the block of proximal environments (this block explained more variance than any other individual block) and the individual significant predictors of each outcome. One interesting difference between the outcomes related to social justice and those related to diversity was that the extent to which students reported learning from community members was a positive predictor of both social justice outcomes, whereas learning from host site staff was a positive predictor of both diversity outcomes. As much of the prior literature has focused on interactions with community members or other students (e.g., Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones et al., 2012; Keen & Hall, 2009), this finding points to the importance of considering the role of host site staff in both research and practice.

Another particularly noteworthy finding was that the comprehensiveness of students' reorientation experience was a significant predictor of both change outcomes, but not for either influence outcome; however, reorientation was a significant positive predictor of all four outcomes until students' posttrip engagement was added to the model. After controlling for posttrip engagement, reorientation was no longer a significant predictor of either influence outcome. Researchers have identified that reorientation is important for helping students deal with adjustment issues upon return to campus (e.g., Jones et al., 2012), which is often the rationale given for creating reorientation programs. However, even more important may be the way in which reorientation programs help students continue the momentum coming out of their AB. This finding can provide important guidance for practitioners planning reorientation programs, as it may be more worthwhile to organize these programs around opportunities for future engagement and less on dealing with readjustment issues.

Somewhat surprising in the results was the fact that more program variables were

not significant predictors of each of the outcomes, especially considering the strong support in prior research for the inclusion of each variable. It may be that some variables matter more in longer-term programs, rather than short-term experiences such as ABs, or that the time between the experience and the outcome measured was so long that the effect of each individual variable was less than it would have been right after the trip. Despite the relatively small number of individual significant predictors, though, this study clearly points to the importance of program structure in facilitating student development. Consistent with recent literature on high-impact practices (e.g., Astin et al., 2014; Soria & Johnson, 2015), the results of this study indicate that it is not enough to encourage students to simply participate in a high-impact practice such as ABs; how those programs are structured and what happens during the AB matter.

Turning to what students do in the year after returning to campus, because students who chose to participate in ABs reported high levels of engagement prior to the AB, it is not surprising that most students continued to be engaged in a variety of activities, including community service and service-learning. In general, though, even though students would have done most of these posttrip activities whether or not they had been on an AB trip, they did report that many of these activities helped them build on what they had learned in their AB, reflecting some degree of continued momentum coming out of the AB and leading into these other activities. These activities, and the extent to which they helped students build on what they learned in their AB, also explained an impressively large percentage of the variance in each outcome considering that there were only two dummy variables in this step of the analysis. The effect sizes and variance accounted for were particularly high for students with high posttrip engagement and with regard to the extent to which students perceived that their AB influenced each outcome; however, the effect sizes and variance accounted for in both change variables, and for students with only modest posttrip engagement, were still quite high. The more students engaged in activities that they saw helping them build on what they learned in their AB, the more they continued to build momentum coming out of their AB, and the more they actually thought that their AB influenced their diversity and social justice orientation.

The direction of causality of this relationship is impossible to discern based on this particular study. It could be that students whose ABs had a stronger influence on their social justice and diversity orientations engaged in more posttrip activities as a result, or that engaging in more activities actually heightened the influence of the AB—or both. Scholars performing future research should unpack this relationship further, as it reinforces Keen and Hall's (2009) assertion that scholars need to consider the "larger college experience" (p. 65), rather than one particular program or experience, in understanding how high-impact practices facilitate student development.

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